



CHARACTER BUILDING

TALKS TO YOUNG MEN

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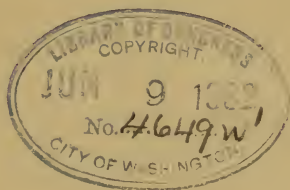
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CHARACTER BUILDING

TALKS TO YOUNG MEN

BY THE

Albert
REV. R. S. BARRETT



NEW YORK
THOMAS WHITTAKER

2 AND 3 BIBLE HOUSE

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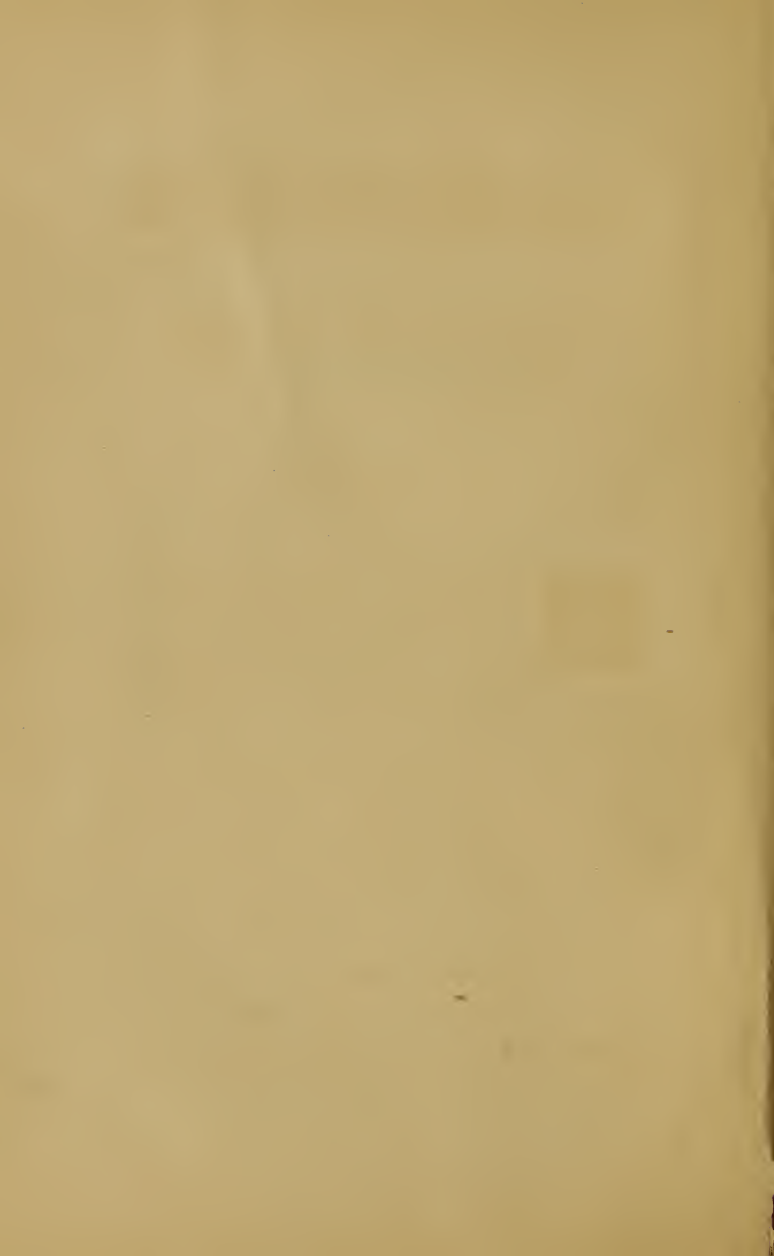
PREFACE.

These talks were given without notes on Sunday evenings, at St. Paul's Church, Henderson, Ky. ; and were published next day in the *Reporter*. This little volume has been made without alteration from the columns of that paper. This will account for several local references. I affectionately dedicate these pages to my congregation at Henderson.

R. S. B.

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TALKS TO YOUNG MEN.

I. — DESTINY.

THINK, as a rule, young men and preachers do not understand each other. It is partly the fault of both. Young men hold aloof and will not let the preachers see their best side, and preachers, on their part, do not let the young men see their human side. Sidney Smith, you remember, said, "There are three sexes, men, women and preachers." Now, that is about the idea that the average young man has of the average preacher, that he is a freak of nature, a unique thing, all by himself. I confess a decided partiality for young men. I do not pretend to think them angels. Indeed, I dare say they are even *worse* than most preachers

think, and yet, I do not think I contradict myself when I say they are also *better* than most preachers think. They are a strange mixture of good and evil. On the steamboat the other night, I found fifteen or twenty young men. They did not know that I was a preacher, and swore and talked outrageously enough for several hours. One might have thought them wholly bad, but I knew better. And so it proved. As the night wore on they began to talk more quietly, and expressed some very sensible and reverent views about sacred things. I heard them admire the earnest religious character of some one whom they knew.

Indeed, I have known young men to go home from a drunken debauch to deplore their weakness and cry to God for strength.

I have been led to these remarks at the outset of our talks, because I want you to feel my sincere respect for the good that is in you. I earnestly desire to take hold of that good, and if God should so honor me to help that good to be better. I speak simply as a young man to young men.

Now, the first thing I am going to say is

that I want you all to believe in your own *destiny*. I do not mean that you were born under some lucky star, or that the fates have intended you to be the President of the United States. I mean that you ought to realize that God has made you and kept you for a purpose. Never think that Blind Fate is your mother, and that she has left you helpless at the door of creation like a foundling child ; but believe that God is your father, and that he has led you a free-born son into this school of life to learn and to labor. Learn to believe that you and I and every man has a place in the great scheme of this world ; that God has given us powers and talents and placed us here to be workmen, and that we have a work to do which will not be done at all unless it be done by us.

When a young man has grasped with both hands this idea that he has a destiny, and that there is a purpose and reason for his particular existence, I think he has one of the best heritages a young man can have.

But many have no such idea. To many, life has no purpose. They go along the road

gathering the flowers at random. They live, talk, laugh, drink, and dance, not to re-create the jaded energies for to-morrow's battle, but because such things amuse them and kill the time.

Such a thing as earnestly asking, "What am I for?" "What am I to be?" "What am I to do?" "What am I now doing to fulfill my destiny?" such questions do not enter their heads.

The boy in a deep study at his desk is not thinking of his responsibilities, but of how he can mend his skates.

What is the blue-eyed youth thinking about on the summer's morning, as he gazes out the church window at the sky? Of his destiny? Perhaps he thinks so, but not of what we mean by destiny. And the young men eagerly discussing some question over their cigars. Is it the battle of life or the next dancing party? So they go, drifting along, drifting along down the stream, singing as they go. Drifting along through the happy morning and under the bright sky, thinking that it is enough to live.

To this merry crew, we hear the words of the wise man calling from the shore: "Rejoice, O young man in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart and in the light of thine eyes, but know thou for all these things, God will bring thee to judgment."

We do not think that Solomon intended in these words to reprove the joy and gladness of youth, or discourage the merry heart and glad countenance, or cut off one innocent pleasure, or make any less young and gay.

Solomon did not think a young had reached his destiny when he stopped dancing, and held up his hands in horror at a billiard cue. He only wanted all young men to feel that God would bring youth as well as age to judgment. He wanted all to feel in this best and most important, this seed-time of life, that they are real and responsible men, with work to do and God over head. He wanted them to realize that they have a destiny high and holy, which cannot fail except by their own neglect.

This brings us to our second point, which is, that this destiny of which we have been

speaking is in a large measure in our own keeping. There is much fatalism in the world. Men think that the world is controlled by some inexorable fate, that their own destiny is fixed for them by some mysterious hand. I do not believe this at all. I believe in a free will. I believe a man must work out his own salvation, temporal and spiritual. God gives him this salvation of course, but he must work it out. God gives salvation as he might give a garden or vineyard, but on the man will depend whether it brings forth fruit or weeds. I do not deny that there are circumstances which affect your destiny. But circumstances cannot control it. Circumstances may be overruled; they may be captured like the enemy's guns and turned to our own advantage. Your destiny will depend greatly on your *will*. Believe in your own *will*. Put these two things together, *destiny* and *will*, and raise them high in your mind. Submit neither to any power but the will of God. Never weakly think that you cannot help doing wrong or neglecting duty. Never think yourself the creature of circumstance, or of any other crea-

ture, but with humble trust in God, and submission to Him go forth a free man of destiny and will.

This is not vanity or self conceit. Vanity fixes a man's thoughts upon himself and not upon his work. We must forget ourselves in our work, just as miners put their candles in their caps to keep their own shadows from falling on their work.

Nor is there any ambition is this. I don't know that ambition is always wrong, but this of which I am speaking is not ambition, it is aspiration. There is a great difference. Ambition wishes to *have* what aspiration desires to *deserve*. Ambition wishes to *seem* what aspiration desires to *be*. In politics, ambition makes demagogues, aspiration makes patriots. In religion, ambition makes hypocrites, aspiration makes saints. Ambition seeks wealth and fame, as final ends of life, aspiration seeks them as means to promote the welfare of man and the glory of God. Yes, a belief that God has joined together our destiny and our will is aspiration! And that raises a man far above the brute and crowns his head with a divine glory.

I will not say into what channels your aspiration must flow ; with it all work is dignified. It made the carpenter shop of Nazareth holy, and threw a halo around the tents made by St. Paul.

Let us then earnestly and reverently take hold of the nearest honest work. Wait for nothing. Do not wait for something to turn up. Do not wait for somebody to die and leave you a destiny. Do not hang around and try to marry a destiny. Make one for yourself. Do not wait for genius ; some one has said in substance " while genius is lying on a sofa waiting for inspiration, labor will go to work, buy that sofa and put genius out of the back door."

You are to be congratulated upon living in an age and country in which these principles may reach their highest maturity. America and the Nineteenth Century. These two words are enough to arouse the sleeping aspirations of any youth.

America : a land where no tyrant's heel suppresses your freedom. The Nineteenth Century : a time when every true work will meet

its true reward, and every noble aspiration will have a thousand doors opened to its welcome. What a privilege to live and work in such an age and land. Ours is a soil which yields the richest increase to worthy enterprise. Ours is an age which posterity will call the spring time of invention, when marvels of literature and art and science and mechanism spring up under our feet and over our heads like the grass and leaves.

What a shame to have lived and died in such an age and such a land, and to have taken no part, to have had no place, to have done no work.

You will not, my young brother, permit this to be true of you. Go forth to-night trusting in God. Thank Him for your brain, for your heart, for your free-will, and for a new belief in your own destiny.



II. — VALUE OF TIME.

“**S**O teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom,” said the Psalmist. All that he meant was that he desired God to give him a just sense of the shortness of life, that he might value time and use it well. And that is what we want to-night.

It was Dr. Young who said — “The man is yet unborn who duly weighs an hour.” But some weigh an hour better than others. And other things being equal, he who best weighs the hour best spends the hour. Other things being equal, men are successful as they value time.

Perhaps one reason why we are prodigal of time is because we do not realize how little there is. Youths are often extravagant because they over-estimate their means. Old men are seldom spendthrifts in money or time.

Old men number their days. The two ends of life are like the two ends of an opera glass. From one end it looks very long, from the other very short. A point would be gained if the young men would take account of time.

“The days of our age are three-score years and ten,” — says the Psalmist. That is a liberal estimate. Many of us will go before we are fifty. But for sake of argument suppose we will all live till we are seventy. At that rate you boys of twenty will have 18,250 days; you of twenty-five will have 16,425 days; you of thirty, 14,600 days; you of forty, 10,950 days. That is your capital. But it is capital to which you cannot add. It draws no interest. You live on the principal. Much of it must go for debt. One-third to sleep; a large amount to demands of nature; a heavy tax to the tyranny of custom; a good deal to sickness.

If you had \$16,000 you might think it a goodly sum. But if you could add nothing to it and must live on the principal, and half of it must go for debt, you would be very careful with the other half. So should we be careful

with our days. Seneca said : "It is a virtue to be covetous of time !" No treasure is so precious, and no waste so ruinous. Other treasures may be regained, but not so with time. Some one records having seen the following notice : "Lost! Somewhere between sunrise and sunset, two gold hours, each set with sixty diamond moments. No reward is offered for their recovery, for they are lost forever !" Wealth may be restored ; health regained ; friends reconciled ; even lost reputation redeemed ; but each moment the span of life becomes forever less ! This day just ended with the setting sun will never come back, and the year just closed will never return.

However, there is one way in which life may be prolonged. Did you ever stand and look upon a broad expanse of water ? It is ten miles wide, but looks only three. But, after a while it becomes full of ships and steamers and boats. Some a half mile away ; some a mile, some two miles, some three and four and five and so on, up to ten miles off. Now the water so full of objects seems its full width. So will a life full of events and work be broader

and longer than a smooth, flat life. St. Paul's life seems much longer than Methuselah's. Napoleon's fifty-two years seem ten times as long as the life of some dull old monk. The nineteenth century seems as long as six centuries in the middle ages. So will that life be long in which each day and every hour is filled with work which in the retrospect of age will stand boldly upon the landscape.

It stimulates our wills to see what some men have done with their time. Sir William Hamilton read about 10,000 books and made marginal notes upon them. Macaulay learned German on a sea voyage. St. Paul in about thirty years preached the gospel and planted churches over the whole known world. Francis Xavier baptized a hundred thousand converts. Nero made his unenviable reputation before he was thirty. Alexander made his conquests at the same age. Cæsar is said to have wept when he found that Alexander had completed his work at the age when Cæsar was beginning. What *has* been done, *can* be done!

The next thing we proposed to do was to

give some rules. Rules for saving time are much like rules for saving money. In the first place we must provide against *thieves*. Much time is stolen. Some of it is stolen by *sleep*. I have never heard that you oversleep yourselves, but sleep is a thief that must be watched. Seven or eight hours we need, but no more ; and I will say while on this subject that if you can get three of these hours in before midnight so much the better.

Indolence is another thief, but I will pass that by.

Procrastination is called " the thief of time," and surely we must not procrastinate if we would save time. If a man says he wants to see you some time, say to him " you had better see me now ! " It would be well for all to write where they can see it on waking, and above the desk, and on the work shop door : " Now is the acceptable time, now is the day of salvation."

Loafing is a bad thief. A man is not necessarily a loafer because he is on the street. I notice that in this city much trade is carried on upon the street. We must not judge

others, but we must guard ourselves against loafing. It is a bad business. It is poor recreation. I like to see young people amuse themselves. I do not think that earnest play is a waste of time. It is good for soul as well as body. I wish you had a good base ball club, and a good boating club and hunting and fishing club. I would like to join them all. But idleness is a waste of time. It is letting yourself be robbed by a sneak thief. Although I am a preacher, I would rather join a dancing club than to give my name to a street corner caucus.

I think one of the most pitiful sights in this world is a young man with nothing to do. A friend of mine in Richmond, Va., was told of a man who would join his confirmation class. "What does he do?" said my friend. "Well," said the other, "I don't believe he does anything." "Then," said my friend, "I do not want him in my church." Nothing to do! Nothing to do, where others find so much to learn and read and think! Nothing to do, where there are so many invitations to enterprise; so many calls for help; so many mouths to feed; so many souls to save!

Oh, what a spectacle that will be when our generation is called to judgment, and the physician will come and say, "Lord, I spent my few days in relieving pain;" and the lawyer will say: "I dispensed justice;" and the merchant will say: "I promoted commerce;" and the mechanic will say: "With these hands I labored for my children;" and the minister will say: "I preached the gospel;" and angels will say: "We were ministering spirits;" and Jesus will show his hands scarred with the labors of the world's redemption, and then a fine young gentleman with his hands in his pockets will stroll up and say: "Lord, I was a loafer, I had nothing to do."

Yes, sleep, indolence, procrastination, and loafing are some of the thieves. But to save time we must not only watch the thieves, but our own extravagance.

We are prodigal of time. Our first extravagance is that we throw away the fragments. Sometimes we say, "I will not break this five dollar note, for then I will spend it." So we think when we break a day we may spend the fragments. That is a great mistake. I dare

say more time is lost by industrious men in this way than in any other. Some of the greatest works of art and literature, and mechanical invention, have been accomplished with the fragments of time. Dr. Abercrombie was a busy physician, yet he wrote many valuable books with a lead pencil while traveling in his carriage. Hugh Miller was a stone cutter, but he wrote a library of science. Fulton invented the steamboat and Morse the telegraph with the fragments of time. "Gather up the fragments," said the Saviour, "that nothing be lost."

Another piece of extravagance is giving more for a thing than it is worth. Some things are worth a dollar, but dear at two dollars. Some things are worth an hour, but dear at two hours. There is an expression, "the game is not worth the candle." Very often a game is not worth the time it takes.

I have already said, I believe in hearty recreations. But these are relishes, not food. We must not make a dinner of sweetmeats. The great bulk of time must be given to solid duty. Make these two rules: "First, that all

time is precious, and secondly, that it ought to be dispensed to the objects of life according to their value."

But let me say that there is one object to which we cannot give too much time. No man can give too much time to doing good. No man can spend too much time in helping his fellowman, in making him better, in leading him upward, in bringing him to God, in conducting him to a safe entrance into that land where days are not numbered and years cannot fail. No man can give too much time to his own religion, to his own soul's safety. I expect when we pass to that land where we shall "duly weigh an hour," that religion will seem the only object worth our precious time. Yet many heathen who know no such object will arise up against us. Not only against Domitian who spent his kingly time in killing flies, not only against Nero who fiddled while Rome burnt, not only against the King of Parthia who killed moles, but against us also who in our grand age, give our time to trifles.

Let me beg you to set two guards about the day, one at the morning and one at the even-

ing. When you rise, ask God to help you spend the day. And when you go to rest examine that day in His sight.

And so when the angel which St. John saw in the Revelation "clothed in a cloud, with a rainbow upon his head, and his face as it were the sun and his feet as pillars of fire, shall stand upon the sea and upon the earth, and swear by Him that liveth forever that there shall be time no longer," then I trust we shall all have the best treasure that time can buy, even the hope of a blessed immortality.



READING.

IF Solomon thought in his day, that “of making many books there is no end,” what would he think now if we could carry him through one of our great libraries. The Congressional library at Washington has 270,000 volumes. There are many other libraries as large and some much larger. The Royal Library at Munich and the Imperial Library at St. Petersburg have 900,000 volumes. The National Library of France and the British Museum have each 1,500,000 volumes.

All of this has been done in modern times. As late as 1300 the library of Oxford was locked up in a little box. In 1494 the library of the Bishop of Winchester had parts of seventeen books. When he borrowed a Bible from St. Swithen, he gave a heavy bond that he would bring it back safe. Then one could

easily "read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest" all the books in reach. But now it would take a life time to look over the books written in a single year. What must we do? Why, we must choose our books. Read as many as we can of the good, and that we may do this we must let the bad entirely alone.

If you know of a clear stream full of bass and salmon and trout, you would not go to a mud puddle and fish for minnows and eels. So, give your reading time to the great books. Never read a poor book. Never read "Trash." I suppose there are about two hundred good novels in this world which any one may read with profit. Most of the remainder are trash. But two hundred novels are certainly enough for a life time. I think it will not hurt anybody to read two or three novels a year. But, as you are going to read but two hundred, be very careful how you choose them. Don't read any trashy novels; and as for sensational story papers, flee them as a pestilence. It is really almost enough to make one despair of our race to see a strong, able-bodied young man hiding behind the folds of a cheap wood-

cut paper, concentrating the whole of his mighty genius upon some sentimental romance of love and blood !

Such reading is poison ! If weakens the mind, inflames the imagination, warps the judgment, deadens the conscience, and makes the reader look at all the world with a jaundiced eye.

But, you say, we read these questionable books, as we go into questionable places, to learn life. You had just as well go into a tiger's cage to learn zoology. To love a bad book because of its beauty is like fondling the coils of a serpent because they are bright, or caressing the hand of an assassin because it is jeweled. You may think these books do not hurt you, but they do hurt you. They are poison, and they not only fill you with ulcers, but blind your eyes so that you cannot see them.

About ten years ago I was one day denouncing a certain book of poetry before a Bible class of young ladies. "Why," said one of the girls, "I keep that book under my pillow, and it has never hurt me." But not very long

after that this very girl ran off and married one of the most worthless characters in the community.

I am sure it is a good rule for every aspiring young man to make, that he will read no doubtful literature, no dime novels, no novels which we do not know to be truly great books, and no story papers, and I might add there is a good deal in some of the daily papers which will do us no good.

A book, after all, is but the companionship of an absent author. And surely no one would prefer to sit down and listen to some obscure fellow spin an imagined story from his sickly brain, than to hear Bayard Taylor tell of his travels, or Dean Stanley relate the life of Dr. Arnold.

What a privilege to be admitted into the company of the mighty dead and to hear them talk. We should like to have known old Chaucer and Shakespeare and Milton, but we have on our bookshelves the best they had to say.

We should like to have listened to South or Burke or Webster, but we have their best

speeches. We can go into the presence of all the great of earth. They will give us their wisest words. We are not angered at their reproofs. They furnish us the best amusement; they give their rich experience; they impart knowledge which is the fruit of a life's research; they form our own style of thinking and speaking, so that after we have walked a time together we catch step, and find ourselves. learning the measured tread of Dr. Jonson, or writing the simple Saxon of Bunyan.

But you will ask, when shall we who make our living at desk or counter find the time to do this reading? That depends upon your habits. But I am sure all can find time to read one, and I think two hours every day. That would carry you through thirty or forty books a year, and that is about as much as one wants to read.

By two hours thus spent you will soon acquire the invaluable habit of *method*, and qualify yourself to stand among men of culture and make a mark in the world.

Some young men are discouraged from reading because they have not had a college educa-

tion. We do not know the classics, they say. Well, if by classies you mean Latin and Greek, I think most young men are just as well off without them as they are with them.

They say a physician must have Latin to write prescriptions which nobody else can read. A school teacher must know "the languages." A preacher must have Greek and Hebrew. But I think there is a vast amount of time wasted in teaching Latin and Greek to boys who intend to forget it as soon as they can. At any rate I should say, don't be discouraged because you don't know Latin. I do not believe that one cannot speak good English without a knowledge of Latin. It will help of course, but I know men who speak and write well who have no Latin. I believe in our own language and literature. I think it is as much better than the ancient as the sun is brighter than the moon. The moon rules the night, and the classics the dark ages, but the English tongue in the nineteenth century is the sun at its meridian!

Mr. Garfield once wisely said: "Grecian children were taught to reverence the virtues

of their ancestors, but our educational forces are so wielded as to teach our children to admire most that which is foreign, fabulous, and dead."

An almost new field of inquiry which ought deeply to interest every young man is the mighty march of science. However, I warn you against thinking that science is the only truth. Some young men will read a half-column review of Tyndall and Huxley, and then think they are too intellectual to be Christians. There is really no conflict between religion and science. Each has its distinct field of work. The harm is done by scientists meddling with theology, and theologians meddling with science. Indeed, I think more harm has been done to the Christian religion by its foolish friends than by its enemies. There is a vast deal of trash among religious books. Everybody writes about religion now. They must do it. There is everywhere a deep interest on this subject. Novels discuss theology and newspapers publish sermons. There is a deep unrest and ferment in men's minds that must be satisfied. And so there is a great deal of

foolishness written upon this subject. And I expect religious trash is the worst kind of trash; and the worst reading we can do. There are so many really *great* religious books, so many literary gems, so much that is eloquent and thoughtful and honest and liberal and manly, that it does seem a pity for a young man to get his religious notions from some wild, ingenious fellow who is trying to create a sensation and say something startling. Do not read any religious trash.

But let me say one word about The Book. Do you young men read the Bible?

A few years ago I lived on the Potomac river, and some young men came down from Baltimore to shoot ducks. One of them opened his valise to get some cartridges, and something fell out. It was not a flask of whiskey or a deck of cards, but a Bible. I could not help feeling my heart go out to him when I saw it. "Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way, by taking heed thereunto according to Thy word." I think the greatest mistake any man can make in the reading line is to neglect his Bible. Even as a literary

production there is no such book ; the most ancient history, the sublimest poetry, the loftiest philosophy, the sweetest stories, the purest morals, the most perfect style, the most exalted doctrines, and the profoundest truth !

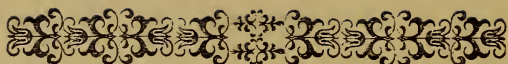
And yet perhaps this book, so studied and loved by many, is dull to you.

It must be because you have not read it aright. Perhaps you read it from habit and when you were sleepy or tired. Perhaps you looked through a chapter with your eyes when your thoughts were afar off.


Try to read it as you would read another book. Read the gospel of St. Matthew right through. Study the circumstances, the author, the readers, the time ; live again at old Rome or Corinth and in the days of St. Paul, and then read through the epistle to the Romans and see if your heart will not burn. Read the Bible when you are well and awake, read it honestly, faithfully, affectionately, as a message from your Father. There is nothing that will help you so much. It will make you better, happier, stronger, and braver. It will become your dearest and most intimate friend.

And when at last the hair is white and the eye dim, and hands, heart, and brain are weary with life's journey, the Bible will be as tender and sympathetic as a mother.

And when later still you lie down on your dying bed, the Bible will be your ministering angel. Other books will look coldly down from the shelves. Shakespeare will in vain attempt to divert you with his dramas, and Byron with his sonnets and Sheridan with his speeches and Dickens and Scott with their stories, but the Bible will draw very near your bed, and take you by the hand, and speak words of encouragement and consolation, and prepare you for that world where we shall have to study no more — for there we shall see face to face, and know all things even as we are also known.



IV. — BAD HABITS.

“ET us lay aside every weight *
* * * * and let us run with
patience the race that is set be-
fore us.”

In the preceding chapter the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews names over many of the heroes of faith, and tells their achievements. In this chapter he says these laurel-crowned victors having finished their course in faith have sat down to watch us. This is to stimulate us. It is the amphitheater of the world that we are in, and tier after tier of witnesses encompass us about. Seeing this is so, let us do our best, let us lay aside every weight.

Did you ever play a match game of Baseball, when all the town were out upon the ground and ready to cheer your club, and the marshals could hardly keep the eager crowd back from the ropes, and the game was very

close, and the scorer called you to the bat? Did you keep your coat on? Didn't your collar choke you? Didn't you give your watch to your friend to hold? Didn't you lay aside every weight? Now the Greek took one step more. He nearly starved himself, and thus laid aside every weight of superfluous flesh, and then put on his thinnest clothing and lightest shoes and was ready! Now the kind of weights that I will speak of to-night are those that fit us like our clothing or even grow upon us like our flesh. Hence they are properly called *habits*. Good habits are like muscles trained and hardened for the race. They help us. Bad habits are like heavy clothing or superfluous flesh or even diseased flesh. They hinder us in the race of life, and in the race for heaven.

Habits are of three kinds—habits of thought, of word, and of deed. Some men imagine that they are not responsible for their thoughts. But they are. Perhaps a man is not to be blamed for every individual thought that the devil thrusts into his mind. But he is certainly responsible for his *habits* of thought,

And I should say for those individual thoughts that come from habit. Start several men out into a strange city to "see the sights." They go in different directions. The good man visits good institutions ; the learned man finds the libraries and museums ; the worldly man finds the theaters ; the dissipated man goes to the saloons. In the same way start several men to thinking from the same standpoint. Immediately their thoughts diverge from force of habit. Now these habits can be controlled. You can *make* your thoughts go in good channels. Or, to change the figure you can force the bad out by filling your mind with the good. You go to-day into the woods and you will find the trees covered with dry, dead leaves. You cannot shake them off. The wind cannot blow them off. The rain cannot beat them off. But after a while the spring will come, the sap will rise and the young, tender leaves will come out and force these dead leaves from the stem and take their places. So with bad thoughts and all bad habits. You cannot say "I will leave them off," unless you bring in the good, and make them force out the bad,

and take the place of the bad, and fill the mind. Now this can be done, and *must* be done. No young man can expect much in the race of life who has no control of his thoughts. Pure thinking is the fountain of all purity; good thinking the fountain of all goodness; but evil thinking is poison in the fountain which vitiates all the branches of life.

Next to thinking is *speaking*. Again you say *men* are not the gossips. But I am not going to speak of gossiping. However, I will say that not all the gossips are found among women. Many women have lifted themselves above this blighting evil. And some men have taken their places. A masculine gossip! A masculine scandal-monger! It is an unamiable picture.

But I desire now to speak of *profanity*. I am satisfied that there are too many of our young men from eight years old and upward who swear. I shall not discuss the propriety of this habit. I know that you all agree with me that it is wrong. I don't suppose any body over twelve years of age thinks it is pretty or smart or brave or manly. Men who swear admit that

it is a weakness. It does no good. It impairs the force of speech ; lets down your character in men's estimation, and incurs the displeasure of God Himself. You have the desire to stop it, and you certainly have the power. Oh, do not take God's holy name in vain. Do not make light of what is sacred, and pure and high. Nothing could induce you to desecrate a sacred place ; why then should you desecrate a sacred name or a sacred thing ?

I don't know whether I ought to say any thing about *gambling* or not. I feel ashamed to stand up and say to my friends and neighbors — “ do not gamble ! ” And yet, because it so often happens when we least expect it, perhaps, a few words will do no harm. If any of you, my young friends, feel a drawing that way ; if you ever bet ; if you ever play for cigars, for money, for *anything*, then you are on the smooth and attracting edge of a whirlpool in which multitudes of noble characters have been wrecked and lost.

No passion leads men to such fearful extremities. It sets up blind fortune for a goddess. It arouses the seven furies within a man.

It kindles the fires of hell in his breast. It nurses rage, promotes quarrels, engenders strife, prompts forgery, suggests murder, and invites suicide ! It steals men's hearts or turns them to stone. Walpole tells of a gambler who fell at the table in a fit of apoplexy, and his companions began to bet upon his chances of recovery. When the physician came in they would not let him bleed the man because they said it would affect the bet. We know very well that last summer, when President Garfield was hanging between life and death, men bet heavily upon the issue, and even sold pools in Chicago. Now this is the habit that I would warn you against. You say I have taken extreme cases. So I have ; but gambling nearly always leads to extreme cases. And if a man once sets his foot within this labyrinth, he may be working further and further in, when he is trying to work out. Men never plunge headlong into hell. They first pass through the outer gate, and then they take a broad and safe-looking road, smooth and delightful and covered with flowers, and this carries them to the inner gate, "and many there be which go in thereat !"

Another weight which I think our young men ought to lay aside is the *concealed deadly weapon*. What does any man want of a pistol? Is he afraid to walk God's earth without one? What is there for any true man with a clear conscience to be afraid of, I should like to know? Is he afraid something is going to catch him? Is he afraid something is going to hurt him? Oh, young man, don't be afraid. Leave the pistol at home. There's nothing going to hurt you. If you are true gentlemen, fair, upright, honest, sober, and if you trust in God there is no reason on earth for the deadly weapon.

One more habit I will mention to-night. I mean the habit of regarding home as a mere sleeping and eating place—the habit of running the streets, and especially at night. This is sometimes the fault of the parents. They don't make home attractive. That ought to be their study. It is a more important study than Latin or French or music, and a harder study too, I expect. How shall we make home more pleasant than the streets? I think the boys ought to help us do this. The larger

boys must help to make home pleasant to the younger. I believe a love of home and a willingness to stay there is one of the greatest safeguards that can be thrown around a boy, or that a young man can throw around himself.

Of course the time must come when like young birds we must leave the nest, and make a nest of our own. I favor early marriages. I believe if young people did not think that they must wait for fine houses and large incomes ; but, like our happier forefathers, would marry on a modest salary and live in a small house, that thousands of young men would be saved to happy homes before the street habit became fixed and their ruin became inevitable.

I have no time to-night to speak of drinking habits. That deserves a whole lecture.

I have spoken chiefly of general habits. Besides these there are many particular and personal habits. Let us study our habits. Some one has said that "man is merely a bundle of habits." *All* habits are worthy of our attention.

We must take care of our *little* habits.

Little ones are only great ones, condensed into small forms, as the serpent in the egg, the Upas tree in the seed, the explosion in the cold powder. The devil does not apply his match to the hard coal. But he first lights the shavings, and the shavings the wood, and the wood the coal. And while we might have stamped out the blazing shavings the hot burning coals are not so easy to extinguish.

We must also watch our *favorite* habits. We must remember that the strong Samson was betrayed to death by his beloved Delilah.

Again, we must watch our *old* habits which we think we have conquered. If there is one point in our character which has broken down, we must watch that point; just as men watch that part of an embankment which has once given away; and just as firemen continue to watch a house when the fire has been put out, lest there still be smoldering coals which the wind may again fan into a flame.

Now I am very sure that the best way to remember all of these things, is to remember the great race which is set before you. If you are eager to run that race, if you feel the in-

spiration of the cloud of witnesses, if you look unto Jesus, who at the goal presents the prize, if you hear "God's all-animating voice, that calls thee from on high," why then these habits will chafe you like weights and chains, and you will cast them off, and so run that you will obtain. And earth will be better, and heaven will rejoice, and God will say, "Well done!"



V.—STRONG DRINK.

I FEEL that I lack one qualification which has been prominent in most of temperance lecturers whom I have heard. I mean experience. Gough, Murphy, Doutney and the others gain the sympathy of the drinking portion of their audience by telling them how much whisky they have consumed, and what dreadful things they have done. I heard Doutney tell how he killed his father. Now I never killed my father. I have no personal experience, I am glad to say, in this matter. I can well understand how a man whom God has emancipated from the great evil, may be an enthusiastic advocate of temperance. He is so impressed with a sense of the injury he has suffered that he is filled with fury against his old enemy. I think reformed drunkards often go to the extreme of looking upon drinking as the only evil, and ab-

stinence as the only virtue. Now, I do not speak of a personal enemy, and therefore will lack the passion of personal hate which gives eloquence and fire to so many temperance lecturers. Indeed, my friends, I do not stand before you to-night as a temperance lecturer at all ; but only as a preacher of the Gospel. Intemperance is an enemy of Christ, and is therefore a topic for the pulpit.

And then there is another thing that I will not do. I will not relate any sickening stories of what I have seen. That would be easy. Every minister, and I suppose every man, who has lived in a city has witnessed many sorrowful scenes. But what we must do to-night is to discuss this subject quietly and calmly, and see what there is in it, and what is our duty in regard to it.

Let us begin at the bottom. Solomon said, "Look not upon the wine when it is red!" Wine was the only liquor in his day. For five thousand years wine and beer were the only liquors. Distilled liquor dates from the eleventh century. It comes from the bosom of the dark ages. An Alchemist of those

days said, "Distilled liquor is a divinely revealed beverage destined to revive the energies of modern decrepitude." But his anticipations have been sadly belied! The alchemy of the dark ages hatched this venomous serpent out of the egg, but who shall ever put it back into the egg again!

Strong drink is of many kinds. There is *wine* which is the fermented or rotted juice of fruit. There is *beer* which is made of malt and hops, roots and herbs. There are "*bitters*," which are made of everything. There is *rum*, an East Indian spirit made of refuse sugar and molasses. There is *gin*, a contraction of Geneva, and it is made of the oil of turpentine, cedar berries, and potash. There is *brandy* which is distilled from wine and cider and flavored with burnt sugar, hence its name, brandy means burnt. And then there is *whisky*. Whisky is a Saxon word and means "water of life," which is certainly a misnomer. Would not "water of death" be better? When I lived in Richmond, an express wagon came down Main street one day loaded with a barrel of whisky and seven coffins. I

thought it was a very just proportion. Now what men want in all of these liquors is the same. They want *alcohol*! A thing unknown to nature; and therefore *not* the handiwork of Nature's God. Now alcohol is a poison and therefore everything that contains it is dangerous. I do not say that poisons are not sometimes useful. The most careful physicians administer laudanum, morphine, strychnine, and arsenic. And even St. Paul wrote to Timothy who had long been sick, that he must take a *little* wine. But all poisons are dangerous. And medical professors warn their students to be cautious how they administer alcohol. And some go so far as to say that it is a question whether the evil effects of its use do not counterbalance the good effects.

I have great hope from the doctors. I know that all sanitary questions are receiving unusual attention from the masses. Men are beginning to realize that health is the greatest of all earthly blessings; that it is better than wealth or fame. And so when the medical faculty boldly declares that alcohol is an enemy of health, it gives us a new hope for our race.

What is feared is the alcohol habit. And if a man forms that habit, he may at first go to the alcohol through the circuitous route of wine and beer, but he will soon learn the short cut through whisky and rum! A beer drinking people bequeaths to posterity a rum drinking generation, as England shows. Merry England has become drunken England. And a wine-drinking people will be succeeded by a brandy-drinking people, as may be seen in France where, it appears from recent statistics, there are more drunkards than in America. And if drinking is worse in England and France than with us it must be fearful. We know what it is in America. We know that we have to pay every month the heavy expense of trying drunken and drinking men. We have to build jails and asylums and prisons. We have to pay for the support of 10,000 lunatics who were made lunatics by drink, and for 25,000 criminals who were made criminals by drink, and for 150,000 paupers who were made paupers by drink! Have sober men, then, no interest in a question which costs them so much? Have I no voice in a matter which levies a tax upon my purse year by year?

But, let that go. I am willing to leave this aspect of the question in the hands of your Circuit Judge. And, by the way, I would for one, like to put on record my appreciation of his boldness in rebuking vice, his faithfulness in upholding virtue, and his eloquence in pleading for law and order in our midst. He said the other day in his charge to the grand jury that if he had the money spent for whisky in this circuit since he has been its judge, he could connect all of the towns of the circuit by railroad and have \$500,000 left in the treasury.

But let us draw still nearer to this question, young gentlemen. Let us be selfish, if you please. Let us forget our country, our church, our society, and our neighbors. Let us forget the convicts, the maniacs, and the trampled wife. Let us simply ask, "What is alcohol to *me?*" And in answer to this question let Dr. B. W. Richardson, of London, the very highest authority, be our guide. Suppose I have on a table several glasses of whisky. I drink a glass of whisky and it passes into my blood, through the heart, along the arteries and veins

into the lungs, and finally to the brain. Every part of the body tries to refuse admission to the poison, and so it hurries on, but leaves some behind at every point. When the whisky reaches the heart, it weakens its nerves and the heart beats faster. The heart beats 100,000 strokes a day without the liquor, but with it 130,000 strokes. This extra work is very wearing upon the heart.

At last the alcohol attacks the spinal cord. This makes men stagger, for the spinal cord is poisoned for the time and loses control of the limbs. Finally this same liquor poisons the cerebral or brain centers and dethrones the reason. If I continue to drink, the spinal cord is so poisoned that all control is lost, the brain nerves so poisoned that all reason is lost, and they call that *dead drunk*. And this man made in the image of God lies unconscious, helpless, degraded, poisoned through and through. Dead drunk, but not dead. Put your hand upon his heart; the nerves, those bridles of the heart, are let loose, and the heart bounds at a frightful rate. Dead, and yet he lives. He lives to die another day!

Men drink for many reasons. Some drink to aid their digestion. But in the long run alcohol does not help digestion. If you put an oyster, which, raw, is very digestible, into a glass of alcohol it will shrivel up and become as hard as leather. Alcohol makes food indigestible and hardens the liver itself. Men say we drink because it is cold. But strong drink does not help men endure continued cold. That has been proved in the Arctic explorations. It does not enable men to endure fatigue; that has been proved in the war. It does not help men endure heat; that has been proved by the sun-stroke reports. It does not make men fat, but bloats them. It does not make men healthy. It does not strengthen the constitution, but weakens it. The history of cholera and of all epidemics shows that it lessens the power to resist diseases, and contributes to their fatality by impairing the ability to overcome them. Some persons imagine that drink gives new strength and life and courage and flow of spirits, intellect and wit. And so it does for awhile, and that is its great injury. It uses up the reserve force of health

and brain which God has given for the emergencies of life.

Drink creates nothing; no heat or life or wit or strength or courage. It paralyzes the nerves which guard the *reserve force*, and uses this reserve force when it is not needed. For a while the fire burns bright, the life and intellect are intensified, but when the emergency comes and the extra brain and health is needed, the drinking man fails, and if it be sickness, dies, where the reserve force would have carried him through. What defeated Napoleon at Waterloo was that he had used his reserves in the early part of the battle. Alcohol does not strengthen, but it weakens the heart, it injures the lungs, it shatters the nerves, it poisons the blood. Nothing is more beautiful in man or woman than a ruddy complexion, the glow of health. But the flush of fever is not beautiful, the painted face is not beautiful; but worse than the painted face is the poisoned face, inflamed or flushed with alcohol. That inflammation extends throughout the system. If we could see the heart it would be inflamed. If you could see the lungs they would be in-

flamed. The brain would be inflamed. This Dr. Richardson says: "I once had the unusual, though unhappy, opportunity of observing this phenomenon, in the brain structure of a man who, in a paroxysm of alcoholic excitement, decapitated himself under the wheel of a railroad carriage, and whose brain was instantly evolved from the skull by the crash. The brain itself, entire, was before me within three minutes after the death. It exhaled the odor of spirit most distinctly, and looked as if it had been recently injected with vermilion."

Young men know that alcohol affects the brain, but many of them do not know that it actually goes into the brain and lodges there. Why, cases are on record in which alcohol has actually been distilled from the brain-matter of a dead drunkard; which when set on fire burnt with a blue flame. No wonder the live drunkard sees blue blazes!

The dead drunkard! How sad his fate. He did not intend to be a drunkard. The appetite beguiled him. The temptation became stronger and the will weaker. The brain be-

came cloudy, business went wrong, troubles and perplexities came, the health gave way, and he died. In that once happy home are the signs of poverty. The drunkard's dear wife, in faded dress, weeps bitterly ; his once loved children, neglected and hungry and cold, cling to their mother's side ; and in the chamber of death, with locked doors, the poor skull is opened, and the poisoned brains taken out, and the chemist distils them into a fluid that burns with ghastly blaze to light the pathway of advancing science !

Oh, young men, when in the darkness of night you feel drawn like moths toward the light in the bar-room window, I hope it will remind you of the blue blaze burning from the drunkard's empty skull, and that it may prove to you a signal light of danger that will divert your feet into the paths of temperance and safety.



VI. — COMPANIONS.

BLESSED is the man who walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful." Psalms i. 1.

Every man has a *character*. It may be a bad one, but one of some kind he undoubtedly has. I shall not define character, you know what I mean by it. I desire, however, to speak of one quality of every character, and that is *plasticity*. Soft clay or putty or dough has plasticity, so you know what I mean by that. *All men's* character are plastic. Some more, some less. God speaks of men as potter's clay, which he moulds at will. How far God moulds men's characters and destinies we will not discuss. But we also see that in the jostle and companionship of these plastic characters, they mould and shape each other.

And that is what we will speak about to-night.

No man knows exactly how plastic he is ; and every man, I doubt not, thinks he is less so than he really is. We shall never know in this world how far our salvation or damnation has been affected by contact with our fellows.

As some portions of the body are more susceptible of contagion than other portions, so also are some parts of the character. The intellectual character is affected by other intellects. The emotional character is affected by the emotions of others. The literary and artistic tastes are improved or debased by associations. Sir Peter Lely would never look at a bad picture, because he said it tainted his own pencil.

But the part of us most easily influenced and changed by associations is our moral and religious character.

And then there is another thing. These plastic moral characters are much more affected by evil than by good associations. Men are infected with disease but not with health. Now these are some of the reasons why David

thought a man was blessed if he did not walk with the ungodly, stand with sinners, and sit with the scornful.

But you ask me, did not the Pharisees bring against Jesus the true sentence, "this man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them?" So they did, but you and I are not Jesus. He could go where we cannot go. A glass of pure water may be shaken and remain pure, but a little sediment in the bottom discolors all. Christ had no plasticity in his character. Not even a dent was made upon the Rock of Ages by storms which would sweep us to destruction.

But after all, even we may hold fellowship with men of all kinds if we go among them with the same motives that Jesus went. He mingled with the votaries of sin only to reform them. He went with the publican and sinner as the physician goes into the plague hospital. If that be your spirit, you may still be blessed though you walk and stand and sit with the ungodly and the wicked.

Our text speaks of three classes of dangerous companions, ungodly, sinners and scornful.

The *ungodly* includes all of those who are practically without God. They may be professed infidels or not, but if God is not in any of their thoughts and plans and pleasures; if God is not in any of their counsels, we ought not to walk in their counsels. I advise young men not to select for a companion one who acts and speaks as if God did not exist.

Then comes the *sinner*. In one sense all are sinners. But David means the wicked. He means the dissipated, the gambler, the profane, the vulgar, the adulterer. I know, young gentlemen, that society has with shameless hand opened her doors to all of these. But God will not save your character here and your soul hereafter merely to accommodate society. Society is an imperious queen, with great power and many worshipers, but I say society cannot cleanse the stream which she has permitted to be contaminated by this influx of garbage. If society compels a man to hold sweet converse with profanity and all that is wicked and impure and defiling to the mind and tastes and imagination, then I say he had better quit society. But I don't believe this. I don't be-

lieve any young man is obliged to associate with what is low and degraded, just because society allows low and degraded men into her ranks. Every man can look out for himself. Without any cant or sanctimoniousness or affected goodness or mock modesty he can let others see that he likes what is clean and reverent and noble. And I do not believe any true man will despise him for the preference.

The next step down is to the *scorner*. Men may be ungodly and wicked without being scornful of what is good. The ungodly is an *un*-believer, the sinner is a *mis*-believer, but the scornful is a *dis*-believer. Like the dog in the manger, he worships nothing himself and tries to destroy other men's worship. I think scornors must be altogether avoided. You cannot do them good, and they will do you harm. The ungodly may become interested; the sinner may repent, but Solomon says: "Though thou shouldst bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet will his foolishness not depart from him."

"Blessed is the man that sitteth not in the seat of the scornful!"

We have noticed the progression of sin, first the ungodly, then the sinner, then the scornful. But there is also progression in the character of him who is exposed to sin. First he walks, then he stands, then he sits. More and more secure, until finally lost to a sense of his peril. At first he walks with doubtful and uneasy steps beside his companion. The fascination grows. The distrust wears away. They meet the next companion, the sinner joins the ungodly. They stop, they stand. The scorner comes and offers the companions a chair, and they all sit down together. And the devil goes home to dinner. That is always the way. Sin is gradual. It does not break out upon a man until it has long circulated through this system. Murder, adultery, theft are not committed in deed until they have been committed in thought again and again. Men do not scorn with the scorner until they have sinned with the sinner, and been careless with the ungodly. The taste for bad company grows like the taste for tobacco. At first a mild cigarette makes you sick, but after a while you can smoke an old pipe full of the strong-

est and blackest Kentucky leaf. At one time the ungodly man sickens you, but by and by you can enjoy the blasphemy of the scorner, because you yourself are saturated with the nicotine of his wickedness.

If any foreigner should ask me what I considered the great advantages of our country to young men, I should say that one of the greatest advantages is that any young man, who will, *can* have the companionship and society of the best and purest and wisest men of our land.

And there is no greater advantage to a young man than that.

We sometimes hear young men say, "if I had had Blank's opportunity I could do as well as he." And yet perhaps they neglect the best opportunity Blank had; viz.: the companionship of the great and good. No college, no study, *nothing* can compensate for the loss of good associations.

We must be courteous and polite, and even cordial to all men. "Honor all men," said St. Peter. We ought to have a large sympathy with all men. We ought to feel for them, and

show ourselves ready to serve them. We must despise no man. We must speak evil of no man. But when it comes to selecting friends and companions, it is another matter. In this we must be slow and critical. We must ask, what influence is my contact with this man's thought and habits and conversation having upon my thought and habits and conversation? How does his character affect my character? And if we find that we already have injurious companions, we can, without any pride or foolishness or rudeness, drop out, or so conduct ourselves that these companions will either improve or drop out themselves.

You will find that the world sings a different psalm from this of David. The world says, "Blessed is the man who walks in the counsels of the aristocrat, and standeth in the way of the grandee, and sitteth at the table of the millionaire!"

Please do not misunderstand me. I would not antagonize classes. I do not mean that one class of society has better men than another class. I simply mean to condemn the

world's weakness in running after great people and being ashamed of men of low estate, when the great are godless and the humble are true.

Blessed is the man who has force of character to keep good company !

Blessed is the man who is not afraid to attempt a reformation of ungodly acquaintances and in case of failure to forsake them !

Blessed is the man who is not ashamed of the aristocracy of hard hands, or the friendship of poor, but honest men ; and is ashamed of the thief in soft raiment and spiritual wickedness in high places !

Blessed is the prosperous man whose success makes him humble and thankful instead of contemptuous and proud !

Blessed is the man who in shunning evil associates does not become sanctimonious and pharisaical ; but who is like the Lord, who being equal with God, took the form of a servant, and bore a kind and friendly demeanor toward all mankind.

And lastly, let me say, blessed is the man who in choosing friends and companions, ever strives to cultivate the acquaintance and com-

panionship of Him who is "the chief of ten thousand and altogether lovely," so that he shall be like the disciples of old, who, though unlearned and ignorant men, astonished the people with their wisdom and power. "Men took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus."



VII. — RELIGION.

“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.” Acts—16: 21.

FOR six Sunday evenings I have been speaking to you upon quite a variety of subjects. I began by reminding you of your high destiny as men, and the vast possibilities of your life. We then took note of the shortness of this life. We marked the influence of books upon this life. We considered bad habits, the weights which retard the work of life. We gave a whole lecture to strong drink, the worst of these habits, and another lecture to the influence of companions.

So far, we have been speaking of *moralities* only. This evening, in this closing talk, let *religion* be our theme. You know a man may be moral without being religious. Some irreligious men neither swear, nor drink, nor gamble, nor slander, nor steal. And morality is

certainly better than immorality. But irreligious morality does not please God. It is not a stepping-stone to God. It is not meeting God half way. And while you may indeed be moral without religion it is very difficult and improbable, and it would be impossible, I think, but for the support received from a religious atmosphere. Irreligious morality is the reflected light of Christian civilization, just as the suburbs of a city receive a reflected light from the street lamps. Undoubtedly, the true power, the great power to make men temperate and pure is to make them the followers of Jesus. We may illustrate this by a well-known story from classic mythology. On an isle in the sea near Peloris, south of Italy, once dwelt some sirens, who by their music and songs often tempted the sailors from their voyages, and after lulling them to sleep drowned them in the sea. When Ulysses went that way he stopped up his sailors' ears and bound himself to the mast, and so with great pains got safely by. But when Orpheus came with his ship to that isle he took out his lyre and poured forth such strains of melody that the en-

raptured sailors forgot the sirens altogether. So I say, men may bind their unwilling hearts by fear of public opinion, and so pass regretfully by the world's allurements. But the Gospel, which binds no man, fills his soul with heavenly music that drowns the fascinations of sin. And that is not all. The mere moralities, with all their pains to carry the man past the sirens, launch him at last upon a boundless and shoreless sea. But religion not only fills the voyage itself with music, but bears the bark over the stormy sea to shining shores and a happy haven !

That is what *salvation* is. "The promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." Therefore salvation is everything. And when Paul and Silas said to the jailor, "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be *saved*," they meant everything. It means a happy voyage as well as a happy destination. Salvation begins now. Oh, "my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they may be saved." My desire and prayer is that salvation may come to you now, and from this moment bear its fruits, making

your youth joyous and pure, your manhood strong, your age blessed, and your eternity glorious! How shall we gain so great a boon? Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Perhaps you have thought that religion is something else. Perhaps you thought it was sitting up straight all day Sunday reading a dry book. Perhaps you thought it was being solemn and sanctimonious. Perhaps you thought it was giving up your youthful spirit and gladness of heart. Perhaps you thought it was thinking about death. Perhaps you thought it was setting yourself up for a young saint. Perhaps you thought it was going through some miraculous experience, some convulsions of joy and sorrow and hope and fear. But, whatever you have thought, Christianity in reality and truth is believing on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Is that all? you ask. Yes, that *includes* all. Do I believe in repentance? Yes: for "except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Do I believe in conversion? Yes, for "except ye be converted ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." Do I believe in baptism? Yes, for "except a man be born of water

and the spirit he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God." Do I believe in sanctification? Yes, I believe in "holiness, without which no man can see the Lord." I believe all this and still I say, "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved!" Let me explain myself. Suppose this room to be a dark, damp cavern. Suppose I was born here and reared here without one ray of light. They tell me that this place is damp and dark and cold and filled with loathsome reptiles. I know that it is true, yet I should miss these crawling creatures if removed; they are my only company. They tell me that there is beyond a world of light and beauty. In one sense I believe it. I indifferently suppose it is true. I have no experience of such things. The words beauty and light make no distinct impressions upon my mind. Yet perhaps it is all true. But as time wears away I become dissatisfied. The place grows wearisome. The serpents sting me. I long for a change. I clamor upon the walls, but all in vain. But at last a friendly hand makes an opening and a white ray of light beams

down. Oh, the revelation. It does not yet show the outer world, but this first light shows me the horrors of my prison house, the slimy floor, the loathsome creatures. I clamor again upon the walls, but again in vain. I feel that outside help must save me if I am saved at all. I look hard at the opening, and in it I see a hand; a friendly hand; an inviting hand; and I hear a voice saying "come." I flee from the stinging scorpions and fatal fangs. I hasten to that outreaching hand. I am lifted up. I am saved. My kind friend takes me to his bosom. He even permits me to sign a contract by which I become his brother, his father's son, his co-heir. Oh, what can I do to show my gratitude. "Three things," he says, "first, love me; second, join with me in saving others; third, get the foul dungeon's poison out of your system." Alas, my benefactor, these are privileges, not labors, to my grateful heart! I think you already see the application of all this to the soul's salvation. The natural man is in a world of darkness and sin. The old serpent stings him. Perhaps he longs for release. The Holy Spirit

is the friendly light, dawning gradually upon some, flashing upon others. That light shows him the serpents of death — that is *conviction*. He labors to escape unhelped and alone, but fails, — that is *dead works without faith*. The Holy Light shows him Jesus. He sees and realizes and trusts — that is *faith*. He turns away *from* the venom of sin — that is *repentance*. He turns *to* the outstretched hand of Jesus — that is *conversion*. He is re-born into covenanted relations with God in *baptism*; either making for the first time this contract himself, or ratifying with his own signature a contract already made. He loves and praises his benefactor — that is *worship*. He helps others — that is *good works*. He labors with spiritual food and exercise, to cleanse his soul of sin's poison — that is *sanctification*.

All of these things are inseparable from the plan of salvation and inseparable from the belief in Jesus. What saved the man? Believing, trusting the saving arm of Christ. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and all the rest of the plan will grow out of it. Believe and thou shalt be saved.

The longer I live to see my fellow-men and to know my own poor heart, the more I am convinced that Christianity is a personal matter between the soul and the Saviour. Men and women ask, Can church members do this or that, or indulge in such and such amusements? All I say is, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, rely on Him, confide in Him, be in union with Him, and you are a better judge than I can be as to what you must do. I am not asking you young men to embrace any set of rules. I am not asking you blindly to swallow any superstitions or old wives' fables. I am not asking you merely to fall into some conventional, beaten track. Nor to sink your manhood in anything weak or effeminate, nor to set yourselves up for young saints; nor to feed on lifeless fossils of the past. But I do ask you to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Not the Christ of history; nor the Jesus of two thousand years ago. But the Jesus of the Nineteenth century. The Jesus of 1882. The Jesus of this 5th day of February. The Jesus who this very moment, alive, breathing and pulsating with love, sits

at the right hand of His Father and our Father. Nothing else will do. Nothing else will sustain a man in his real, present, and personal needs, but a real, present, and personal Saviour. You want the element of personal power and help, which you find when walking side by side and hand in hand with the living Christ.

Have you ever thoughtlessly said that this Christ is not worthy of a man's life, this Christ is for women and children? Oh, try him, and you will find that here *only* may the soul find a worthy object, here *only* its full development. What other thing can you set up and say, *this* is worthy of my immortal powers. What other god is worth living for.

Is your *body* your god? Then very soon your god will be a rotting mass, with no throne but a coffin and no worshipers but worms. "He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption."

Is earthly *love* your god? Alas! alas! What a cruel god you have. It will spend your first years in gaining possession of your heart, and your last years in breaking it. God

save me from love, if the grave is the end of loved ones.

Is *fame* your god? And what have you to expect from fame? The past with its brightest stars growing dim in the distance, the present with its millions of ambitious men crowding and climbing over each other's heads; the future with its wonderful advancements in learning and science, all show what a small share must be ours when fame divides her spoils. When you die it will make a few circles of comment and grief among your friends. Like a stone cast upon the water, there are the well-defined circles growing feebler, and then ceasing as the stream flows smoothly on. Friends will weep some days; acquaintances will make their exclamations; the newspaper will have its soon-forgotten paragraph; and the tomb will record its simple history that you were born on one day and died on another. Be these your gods, young men!

Compare them with the cause of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Divest that cause of all its scaffolding and incidentals, the hypocrisies, the envyings, the human mistakes and sins

which hang over the dear face of Jesus to hide it. Look at that face as it is. Look at His helping hand. Look at His pure, great cause which, in spite of all its human overgrowth, is doing so much for man, and which can do so much for you.

Why do young men avoid Him, who Himself a young man was so gentle and modest and pure and sympathetic.

Souls of men ! why will ye scatter
Like a crowd of frightened sheep ?
Foolish hearts ! why will ye wander
From a love so true and deep ?

It is God : His love looks mighty,
But is mightier than it seems !
'Tis our Father : and His fondness
Goes far out beyond our dreams.

There's a wideness in God's mercy,
Like the wideness of the sea ;
There's a kindness in his justice,
Which is more than liberty.

There is grace enough for thousands
Of new worlds as great as this ;
There is room for fresh creations
In that upper home of bliss.

For the love of God is broader
Than the measure of man's mind;
And the heart of the Eternal
Is most wonderfully kind.

There is plentiful redemption
In the blood that has been shed;
There is joy for all the members
In the sorrows of the head.

If our love were but more simple
We should take Him at His word;
And our lives would be all sunshine
In the sweetness of the Lord.

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